The Prime Minister convened the Chief Ministers' Conference on WTO Agreement on Agriculture as part of the effort to involve States in the on-going negotiations. The Conference provided an opportunity for frank exchange of views and sharing of concerns and suggestions. In line with suggestions from several States, the Prime Minister announced the constitution of a Standing Committee of Union Ministers and Chief Ministers to consider issues concerning agricultural strategies, food management and promotion of agricultural exports in the wake of WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

Abolition of Non-formal Education System

*472. SHRI K. M. KHAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the system of non-formal education, introduced to cater to the needs of drop-out students at the elementary level, has been abolished;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government have decided to introduce some innovative scheme of education, instead of Non-formal Education Scheme; and

(d) if so, the details therefor and its rate of success so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) to (d) The scheme of Non-formal Education was evaluated, among others, by Programme Evaluation Organisation of Planning Commission and Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development. Based on their recommendations and the experiences of implementing agencies, the scheme has been revised as "Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative & Innovative Education" (EGS&AIE) and made operational w.e.f. 1.4.2001. The revised scheme has three broad strategies, viz.

(i) setting up of alternative schools in school-less habitations (EGS) with in a radius of 1 K.M.

(ii) interventions for mainstreaming of 'out of school' children through bridge courses, back to school camps, etc. and

(iii) strategies for very specific, difficult groups of children who cannot be mainstreamed.

Under the revised scheme, per learner cost has been enhanced from Rs. 375/- to Rs. 845/- p.a. for primary level and from Rs. 580/- to Rs. 1200/- p.a. for Upper Primary level. The honorarium to Education Volunteers (Instructors) has also been enhanced upto Rs. 1,000/- p.m. from Rs. 200/- p.m. and the Cluster Resource Persons (Supervisors) from Rs. 500/- p.m. to Rs. 1500/- p.m. The scheme is to be implemented through State Level Societies who have been delegated powers to appraised, sanction and monitor the projects. As part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan framework, the scheme is expected to address the educational requirements of out of schools children.

Food Processing in Karnataka

*473. SHRI H. K. JAVARE GOWDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that potato, mango, tomato, tamarind and other horticultural products are in plenty in Karnataka, but there are no required food processing industries; and

(b) if so, the details of steps taken/proposed to be taken to process the products and for their marketing?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) As per statistics of National Horticulture Board, the State of Karnataka accounts for 9.7% of fruits and vegetables production in the country. The Department of Food Processing Industries assist the private sector, Non-Government Organisations, Cooperatives and Public Sector Undertakings in setting up food processing ventures, developing human resoruces, in quality control, and research and development in processed food. 322 units have been granted licence in Karnataka under the Fruit Products Order 1955, administerd by the Department of Food Processing Industries.

The Department of Food Processing Industries provides financial assistance in the form of grant and loan for setting up of food processing industries, for post harvest infrastructure like establishment of cold storage, etc. including marketing. Financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 12.86 crores has been given in the four years of the IX Plan for establishment of Food Processing Industries units, infrastructure, human resource development and research and development. In addition two food parks have also been sanctioned for which an outright grant of Rs. 2 crore each has been sanctioned as first instalment in the current year. This sector has been included under priority sector lending by financial institutions. The Department of Food Processing